

Appl. No. : **10/009,851**
Filed : **November 6, 2001**

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 42-43.

Please amend Claims 34 and 48.

1-33. (Cancelled).

34. (Currently Amended) A thermal treatment installation/ring combination comprising a loading chamber, ~~loading means~~, transport means and a thermal treatment chamber for carrying out a thermal treatment, said thermal treatment chamber comprising a top section and a bottom section located opposite to each other and between which a wafer can be accommodated for carrying out a thermal treatment, said transport means being equipped to move wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein said thermal treatment chamber is configured to carry out a thermal treatment on one wafer at a time, said transport means being equipped to move individual wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber and insert said individual wafer/ring combination into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein the thermal treatment chamber is configured to accommodate said ring surrounding the wafer.

35. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein said top section and bottom section are provided with heating means.

36. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein an internal diameter of an inner edge of the ring is larger than an external diameter of the wafer.

37. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein the ring is configured to support said wafer at least during transfer.

38. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 37, wherein the ring is mechanically joined to the transport means.

39. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 37, wherein the treatment chamber is configured to accommodate an auxiliary element for supporting the ring and the wafer at least during transfer.

40. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 39, wherein said auxiliary element is mechanically joined to the transport means.

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41. (Previously Presented) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 39, wherein said ring is provided with heating means.

42-47. (Cancelled).

48. (Currently Amended) A thermal treatment installation/ring combination comprising a loading chamber, wherein ~~[[one]]~~a wafer ~~of a set of wafers~~ and a ring are combined to form a wafer/ring combination, a handling robot and a thermal treatment chamber for carrying out a thermal treatment, said thermal treatment chamber comprising a top section and a bottom section located opposite to each other and between which the ~~[[one]]~~wafer can be accommodated for carrying out a thermal treatment, said handling robot being equipped to move wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein said thermal treatment chamber is configured to carry out a thermal treatment on one wafer at a time, said handling robot being equipped to move individual wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber and insert said individual wafer/ring combination into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein the thermal treatment chamber is configured to accommodate said ring surrounding the wafer.